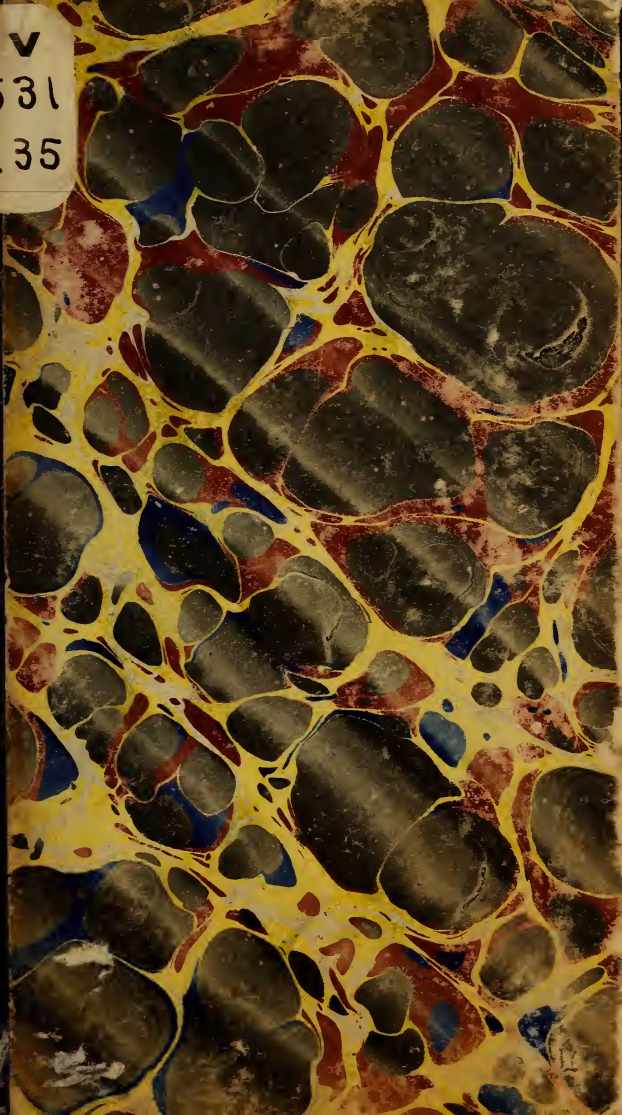


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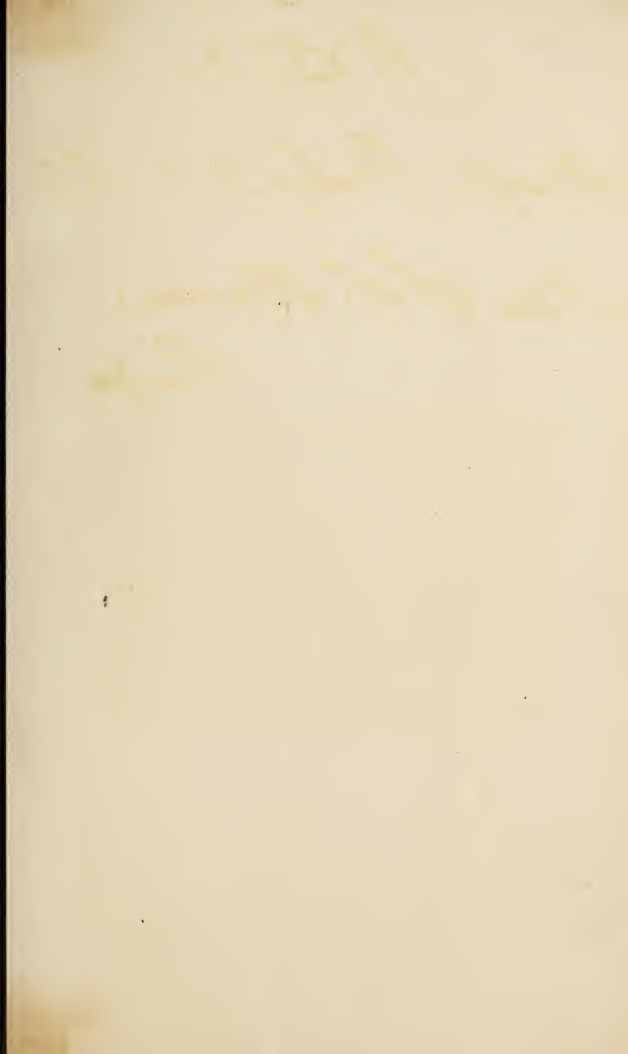
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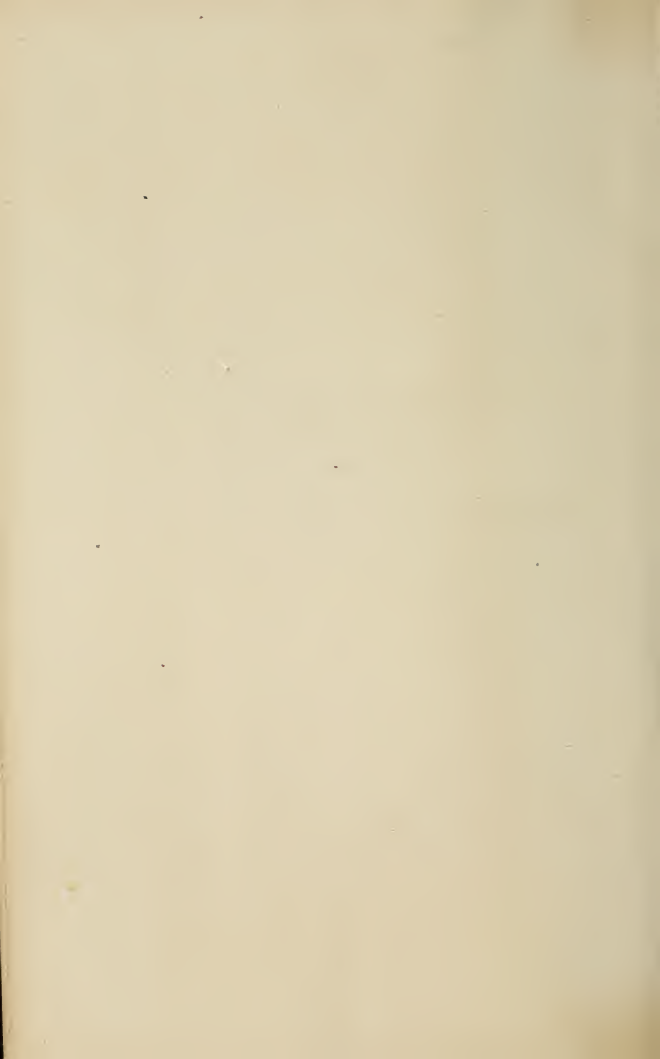
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# LETTERS

TO THE

MEMBERS OF A BIBLE CLASS.

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TO THE

MEMBERS OF A BIBLE CLASS.



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
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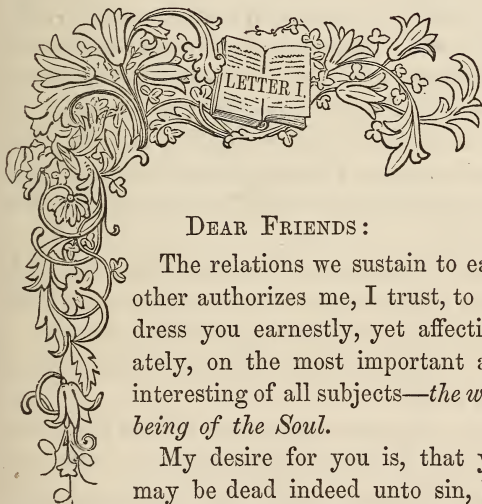
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THE following Seven Letters were actually written to a Bible Class, in which the writer felt an interest from having visited it and the school with which it is connected. They were written without the slightest original design of publication; but as a request has been made that they may be printed, they are committed to the grace of Him who “gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom.”

May it please him to use them for his own glory!



# LETTERS TO A BIBLE CLASS.



DEAR FRIENDS :

The relations we sustain to each other authorizes me, I trust, to address you earnestly, yet affectionately, on the most important and interesting of all subjects—*the well-being of the Soul.*

My desire for you is, that you may be dead indeed unto sin, but *alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.\**

Let me say a few words to you on the last

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\* Rom. vi. 11.

clause of this text—*alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

We know the difference between health and sickness, hunger and food, privation and sufficiency, pain and ease; but these extremes sink into nothing in comparison with two others, *life* and *death*. These are the two great opposites, which appear like the distant and highest mountains, towering above all the other extremes in the landscape. Take away *life*, and all other benefits become a mockery; introduce *death*, and hope fades from the most cheering prospect. Let us look,

1st. To the *means* of becoming alive unto God.

2d. The *evidences* of our being alive unto God.

3d. Some of the *blessings* resulting from it.

(1.) What are the *means* of becoming alive unto God?

The Scripture leaves us at no loss for an answer; for it tells us, that we may be so “*through Jesus Christ our Lord*;” that is, through *faith in him*, and *union to him*.

*Faith* in Christ,—not merely believing that Jesus died for sinners, but feeling, “I am a sinner, I deserve the wrath of God; sin is within me, around me, and cries to heaven for vengeance.

But while, like guilty Cain, the voice of blood cries against me for vengeance, another voice of blood, even that of Jesus, speaketh better things—crying, ‘Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom.’ ”

Oh, wondrous love ! Surely this is that love of Christ which passeth knowledge ! Upon this I cast myself. The door of mercy is unclosed ; the way to a reconciled God and Father is opened ; my rebellious heart is also reconciled : “ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” Short of this *faith* there can be no safety ; all would be a waste howling wilderness ; but this opens the gate of paradise, and sets it before us, though in the distance.

But who shall keep us in the way ?

This is the work of the Holy Spirit, through *union to Christ*. Faith is the work of the Spirit, and the Spirit that quickens, *unites*. He who is the *way* is also the *life*, and *eternal life* can never die,—can never be extinguished. “ If the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”\*

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\* Rom. viii. 11.

We come next to,

(2.) *The evidences of being alive unto God.*

He that is *alive* unto God is *dead* to self-dependence. He is alive, and only alive, "through Jesus Christ our Lord." He once had a bark of his own to trade in, but this has suffered shipwreck, and he is embarked with all his hopes upon another vessel, and that shall ride out every storm.

He that is alive unto God, is also dead unto sin: "Likewise *reckon* ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin," &c. A man who truly *reckons* his losses does not forget them, nor one who reckons his gains. Once a believer can say, My reckoning with sin was all loss, for whenever sin came to parley or barter with me, I was sure to lose. And this because of the deceitfulness of sin. It always promised fair and played false. And yet I listened, because the love of sin was in my heart. But, now I believe in Christ my Lord, I see the exceeding sinfulness of sin; and when my eyes, or my hands, or my tongue, or my heart are tempted, the Spirit reveals Christ and his law and his love. I see what Jesus bore, and what my sins deserve, and my wicked heart is fixed again on him, and



I am "dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God."

Again, he that is alive unto God, is no longer *dead in prayer*. The soul seeks the Lord, and feels that without him all is parched and dry: "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so doth my soul thirst after God."

The last evidence is the crowning evidence, that of your life and conversation. He that is alive unto God, must *live* to him. Prayer is not a mere form, to which he can go and return to the ways of the world; not a papal devotion, from which he can turn to vain conversation and sinful amusement; but it will be hidden *strength* drawn from the Lord, hidden *grace* drawn from the fountain of grace. His "members are yielded as servants unto righteousness;" and that not from a pharisaic spirit of self-righteousness, but from the heart, as one of those who have first "yielded themselves unto God."

Examine yourselves, my dear friends, by these evidences. See whether the source of your life be Christ Jesus; whether temptation, when it assails you, finds you stronger to resist it, being dead indeed unto sin; whether you have

true life in prayer; whether you desire unceasingly and with more singleness of intention, to live unto God.

And then consider,

(3.) *The blessedness of being alive unto God.*

Oh, think of the words, "alive unto God." Doth not the Lord Jesus Christ say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Now, if you could behold one of the glorious angels, walking in brightness and majesty and blessedness, doing the will of God, or standing with holy boldness in the presence of God, and then were to turn your eyes to the dying children of sin and misery, with which so many of our streets abound; some dishonouring God, some dishonouring themselves, all feeling their wretchedness, and awaiting, only in guilt and trembling, the summons to the judgment-seat, where they shall receive eternal condemnation; you would surely say, "What a contrast! Oh that I may join his bright and blessed angels! Oh that I may escape this guilt, and misery, and woe!"

But, my dear friends, this is exactly the difference between life and death. We may, if we use the appointed means, be permitted to join the innumerable company of angels around the throne of God and of the Lamb. We may, if we will, come with boldness to a throne of grace. We may, if we desire it, have God for our Father, Christ for our friend and Redeemer, the Holy Spirit for our sanctifier and comforter, and the heaven of heavens for our inheritance and our home. "We know," says the beloved disciple, "that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness," or the wicked one.

True it is, that of our own selves we can do nothing; that our strength is perfect weakness; that the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God; yea, that the spiritual man who is born again of God, "can receive nothing except it be given him of God."

Yet the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to preach glad tidings, to proclaim and publish peace, glad tidings of great joy. He came to point to the Way of life, to open the promises of life, to bestow the Spirit of life upon all who ask him. He says, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of *life*

freely;" in other words, let him be made "alive unto God." God is all *goodness*—"there is none good but one, that is God." Those who are not alive unto him are not alive to any *true good*.

I remember a young lady who was much lamented, because she died just as she was going to be married. The thought was, that she had died just at the time when she ought to have lived. And so, in a much stronger sense, is it with the dying unbeliever,—just when he ought to live, he dies.

But the Christian's "life is hid with Christ in God." The present is a mere dying life, a spark that shall soon apparently be extinguished; but, then, out of the dying embers shall rise a pure and heavenly flame which shall burn for ever! When Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he also appear with him in glory! It is written of the Lord Jesus, that the *Life* was the *light* of men. We cannot see the *light*, my dear friends, but by coming to it; and so you cannot experience this *Life*, but by tasting of it, and that continually. Oh pray for increased manifestations of *light*, *life* and *love*! To be spiritually minded is *life* and *peace*. Be more earnest in private prayer; look for in-

creased blessings in the use of the public means of grace,—exercise more faith in the Lord by holy obedience, and by works of love. In short, strive, in dependence on his grace, and in the diligent use of appointed means, to be more “*alive unto God*,” and by his grace you may be able to adopt the language of one of our hymns.

Compar'd with Christ, in all beside  
No comeliness I see;  
The one thing needful, dearest Lord,  
Is to be one with thee.

The sense of thy expiring love  
Into my soul convey;  
Thyself bestow! for thee alone,  
My all in all, I pray.

Less than thyself will not suffice  
My comfort to restore:  
More than thyself I cannot crave;  
And thou canst give no more.

Whate'er consists not with thy love,  
O teach me to resign;  
I'm rich to all th' intents of bliss,  
If thou, O Lord, art mine.

Believe me,  
Your very sincere friend  
and servant in the Lord Jesus.

## LETTER II.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS :

I last wrote to you about the blessedness of being *alive unto God*; and dear Miss H. says you would like to receive another letter, so I am now going to say a few words on Ephes. v. 9, “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all *goodness, and righteousness, and truth.*”

When you pass by the shop of a wealthy jeweller, you see various articles of gold and silver displayed in the window; but these are only to direct the merchantman who is seeking goodly pearls to the richer stores that are within; they are to invite him to search out and examine the precious gems in the inner treasure-house. So is it with our good and gracious Lord; we cannot look abroad without being met with tokens of his *goodness*—the glorious heavens, the opening flower, the teeming earth, all speak of his beneficence; but these are only to invite us to come into the inner sanctuary, to come within the vail which Jesus has opened to us through his flesh, to behold the beauty of his holiness,

to taste the riches of redeeming love, of pardoning mercy, and of renewing grace.

Nor does he desire only that we should taste and see, but that we should receive and distribute, take and scatter around us the blessings which he bestows. He wishes not only to *bless*, but to make us *a blessing*. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *much fruit*."

Let me then beg you to consider—

First, the root of all heavenly fruitfulness, "*the Spirit*." Second, the several kinds of fruit, "all goodness," &c.

And, *first*, The root of all heavenly fruit is said to be the Spirit of the Lord, "the fruit of the Spirit."

Now, it was said of our blessed Saviour, not only that he himself should be anointed with the Spirit, but that he should *baptize with the Spirit*. Read what he himself says: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for



the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Christ was not yet glorified.”\*

Now, so needful was it to receive this blessed gift, that the Scripture says, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;” and the Saviour himself assures us, “that except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;”† and that the stress of this passage is not laid on the outward rite or sign, but on the thing signified, is manifest from the 8th verse of the chapter.

The man of the world ridicules and despises this truth as enthusiasm; and the man of this world’s religion, who has the form of godliness without the power, endeavours to obscure it by ascribing virtues to forms and ceremonies, or to annihilate it by the mixture of his works and deeds.

Without his blessed Spirit, there can be no true prayer. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.”‡

And without this blessed Spirit, there can be no true comfort. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that

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\* John vii. 37-39.

† John iii. 5.

‡ John iv. 24.



he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

And without this blessed Spirit there can be no true knowledge of God. "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."\*

And, my dear friends, the operations of this blessed Spirit are not only *requisite*, but *reasonable*. When the infidel scoffs, he scoffs at what is *reasonable*. In the youngest child, or the most decrepit and despised beggar, the tabernacle of clay has an immortal tenant, and, awful thought! unless changed and renewed, immortal for an *eternity* of suffering.

But is it *unreasonable* that the Spirit of God should speak to the spirit of man? That he who gave the principle of natural life, should

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\* John xvi. 13-14.

bestow the principle of spiritual life? Oh, my dear friends, put the word of God to the proof. He speaks to you: Luke xi. 13, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

And do you wish to know whether you have really received the blessed Spirit? Read John i. 12, 13: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And again, Gal. iv. 4-7: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Then if you have received the Lord Jesus as your only Saviour; if you can cast your sins on him, your cares on him,

your wants on him; and if, again, you can call on God the Father, as your Father, and desire to follow him as your Father, and love him as your Father, then you have received the Spirit, the root of heavenly fruitfulness is in you, and you may take the consolation.

But, *secondly*, Let me dwell a little on the several kinds of fruit here described.

The fruit of the Spirit is in all *goodness*, and *righteousness*, and *truth*.

It is in all *goodness*. There are *good things* of this life, such as the rich man received, who was afterward tormented when Lazarus was comforted. And there are good deeds of this life, which have their reward in this life.

But when the soul has been brought to Christ by the Father's covenant love, and has been renewed by the Spirit, it will seek and find the source of all goodness in the ever-blessed Jehovah. Read Jer. xxxi. 11-14: "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and

of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden: and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord."

And such a soul will not only *speaking* good of Jehovah's name, but *do* good *in* his name. See Eph. v. 2: "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."

And as the Lord is loving to every man, so will the true believer be. Read Matt. v. 44-48: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the

publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Walking in the path of love, clad in the garments of love, exhibiting the aspect of love, the true Christian should be truly amiable toward all men, and especially toward the household of faith. He should watch against moroseness of temper, hastiness of language and harshness of expression. One unkind word from a Christian may spoil much good. It may grieve the humble spirit, embitter the opposition of a proud spirit, justify the reproach of a worldly spirit. It may mar the peace of a family, or hinder an enemy from embracing peace.

The fruit of the Spirit is not in partial goodness but in *all* goodness.

Again, *it is in all righteousness.*

The true Christian should not only be universally *amiable*, but strictly and unimpeachably *upright*. His whole conduct should be transparent, and free from selfish, or secret, or sinister ends.

Hence the injunction in Eph. v. 8: "For ye

were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

Remember the Lord sees you, and will judge you, not by outward appearance, but by the very secrets of your hearts. Put away all double dealing. As a Christian *master* should be inflexibly just, so should a Christian *servant*,—"showing *all good fidelity*, and *not purloining*,"—not dishonest in little things, but remembering that he has a Master in heaven, to whom he must give account,—a master who, in his all-wise and gracious providence, has appointed to each of us our work, and will reward the faithful *servant*, while he will punish the unbelieving and unfaithful *prince*.

Again, the fruit of the Spirit is *in all truth*.

He who is renewed by the Spirit must be *true* as well as *just*.

He must worship the Lord in truth;—his soul must be *truly* humbled before him; his heart *truly* devoted to him, and *truly* engaged in his service.

And not only does the Spirit teach *true* devotedness, but this very devotedness must be *according to the word of truth*. Saul of Tarsus verily thought that he ought to do many

things contrary to the Lord Jesus, till through grace he was taught the *truth in the way of truth*.

And as the Spirit works all truth toward God, so also toward man. Truth in its strictest form and scriptural sense is no easy attainment; hence the injunction, even to real Christians, "Therefore, putting away lying, speak every one truth with his neighbour." We must remember, that "no lie is of the truth," and that every thing that is intended to deceive is a lie. Equivocations, excuses, flatteries, idle compliments, ordinary phrases, when untrue, are all contrary to the fruit of the Spirit.

A Christian under some circumstances should not even say, "I am glad to see you," but should substitute some such expression as "I hope you are well." The one may not always be true, the other he ought always to be able to say from the heart to his greatest enemy.

Let me add two brief remarks :

1st. Meditate often on the wonderful *condescension* of the blessed Spirit. Some worldly men can, from educational habits of thought,



discourse in a sentimental manner on the condescension of the Lord Jesus, in coming, while on earth, to dwell *among* us; but the same men little think of the amazing condescension of the blessed Comforter in coming down to dwell *in* us; to take up his abode in such hearts of sin, sorrow and rebellion!

2d. Remember that the blessed Spirit is not only the Comforter, but the Spirit of *life* and *holiness*.

Wherever he dwells he will work. *Life* is inconsistent with *inactivity*, *torpor*, *sleep* and *death*.

Holiness is inconsistent with *impurity*, *trifling* and *vanity*. The fruit of the Spirit will ever be in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.

May the Lord make you all, not only almost, but altogether Christians.

Believe me,

My dear young friends,

Yours affectionately in the Lord.



## LETTER III.

“Blessed is he whose *transgression* is forgiven, whose *sin* is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not *iniquity*, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

## MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:

The psalmist speaks here of *transgression*, of *sin* and of *iniquity*. He speaks of great blessings as connected with the pardon of those things; and thus reminds us of the tremendous evil of the things themselves. Men speak in the present day of remedying evil by human means, and frequently by wicked means. They speak of curing evil by revolution and rebellion, by casting off human and divine authority; but until *sin* be pardoned and cleansed, nothing can be cured. Sin is the great monster evil, in nations, communities and individuals. It is that alone which makes men miserable.

It is sin that brings the soul under the stern hand of adversity; it is sin which brings it under the avenging hand of a righteous God.

No cup of blessing is embittered but by sin. Sin makes the burden which causes every shoulder to stoop, every spirit to sink. Sin gives to life its sorrow, and to death its sting.

How joyfully then should we turn to our present subject, which reminds us not only of the evil, but the remedy; not only of sin, but of salvation from it. Do not think the subject familiar, but draw near and consider it awhile.

*First*, Examine some of the particulars of the blessing here spoken of.

*Second*, Trace the effects upon the soul that receives the blessing.

1st. Let us examine some of the particulars of the blessing here spoken of.

Then look at the variety of the terms spoken of to magnify the grace of God, and to designate man's guilt.

"Transgression," "sin," "iniquity." These are several and distinct things, pointed out to us by the Holy Spirit, as opposed to God's authority, to God's holiness, to God's righteousness or justice. We find David, in the bitterness of his soul, under a sense of guilt, enumerating in the same manner his offences against

God, in the 51st Psalm: "Wash me thoroughly from mine *iniquity*, and cleanse me from my *sin*; for I acknowledge my *transgressions*, and my *sin* is ever before me."

Who is not conscious of acts of rebellion against God's precepts? This is transgression. Who is not conscious of unholy thoughts or desires? This is sin. Who is not conscious of not rendering the heart to that blessed Saviour who died to purchase it—of not rendering the body to him who died to ransom it? This is ingratitude and iniquity.

Let a soul under the stain of these things pass into eternity, and how will it stand? I know not a more moving or pitiable sight than one, otherwise amiable and estimable, moral and useful, sinking into the grave unpardoned—rushing to the judgment-seat uncleansed. To follow that soul to the judgment-day, what a fearful thought. To behold it detected in its rebellion, stained with dark and deep ingratitude, and cankered and reeking with corruption, before the throne of the gracious, the holy, but rejected Saviour! Oh the blessing of that process which can effectually purify from all these!

How many on earth are called blessed for various reasons ! The rich are called blessed ; the healthy are called blessed ; the prosperous are called blessed ; and riches, and health, and prosperity are indeed blessings, if used with thankfulness and for the glory of God. But the time is coming when heaven and earth shall call him blessed, and him alone, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, whose ingratitude is cancelled. These healing streams of grace testify that where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

And, observe, my dear young friends, the procuring cause of this grace. How does the pardoned man attain it ? “Blessed is the man to whom THE LORD imputeth not iniquity.” The mighty one, the holy one, the righteous one will not impute iniquity. Yet he can be just, and still justify the ungodly *who believe in the Lord Jesus*. His blood and righteousness have procured the pardon, purchased the grace, and he, as the Lord of grace, dispenses it to penitent and believing sinners.

And observe the tense which the Spirit of our Lord employs to express his grace. It is the present tense. David does not speak of

the future, but says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." There is only one future tense introduced, and that is a gracious one; it is in the way of promise, and you will find it repeated in the sequel of the Psalm: "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble," &c.\* There are many holy and humble souls who only see, (though they savingly see,) a portion of the covenant of grace. They behold the great atonement with awe, with humility, with gratitude, with faith, with love. But they do not see their present portion and their eternal portion, their sure and individual portion in the covenant. Pray to know and be assured of this, that God would enlarge your hearts, dwell in them, and cause you to know the length and breadth and depth and height of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

2dly. Let us trace the effects on the soul which receives the blessing.

The royal psalmist, who knew much of men, who knew the deceivableness of unrighteousness, who prayed against a deceitful tongue

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\* Ps. xxxii. 7, 8, 10.

and lying lips, expressing the effect of pardoning grace in one word,—the pardoned, justified believer is one “in whose spirit there is *no guile*.”

The beloved disciple assures us of the same truth. “These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their *mouth was found no guile*, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”\*

Our blessed Lord gives the same emphatic description of the believer: “He that *doeth truth* cometh to *the light*, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.”

There are two motives to guile in our nature, and only two. The one is the *selfish desire to deceive*, the other *the fear of punishment*. Both these are removed by a saving faith in the Lord Jesus.

There is *no desire to deceive*, for the believer is convinced that Christ knows all things, and so the psalmist tells us: “I said,

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\* Rev. xiv. 4, 5.

I will confess mine iniquity unto the Lord.” There is no fear of punishment, for he adds, “and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

Let us then, my dear young friends, improve this subject as the royal psalmist did.

1st. For an inducement to seek earnestly and instantly for the converting grace of God, verse 6: “For this, shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.”

2dly. For a warning against delay and neglect: “Surely, in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.”

3dly. For the encouragement of hope in his deliverance, verse 7: “Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.”

Lastly, for the incitement of trust in his guidance. For he saith to every seeking, humble soul: “I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye.” Place yourselves in his hands, my dear young friends, and follow his eye. His hand is a mighty and a gracious

hand; his eye a watchful and a loving eye.  
He never leaves, never fails, never changes.

The Saviour! O what endless charms  
Dwell in the blissful sound!  
Its influence every fear disarms,  
And spreads sweet comfort round.

Here pardon, life, and joys divine,  
In rich effusion flow,  
For guilty rebels lost in sin,  
And doom'd to endless wo.

Th' almighty former of the skies  
Stoop'd to our vile abode;  
While angels view'd with wondering eyes,  
And hail'd the incarnate God!

O the rich depths of love divine!  
Of bliss a boundless store!  
Dear Saviour, let me call thee mine;  
I cannot wish for more!

On thee alone my hope relies,  
Beneath thy cross I fall;  
My Lord, my Life, my Sacrifice,  
My Saviour, and my All!

Believe me,

Your affectionate Friend.



## LETTER IV.

“But Christ being come a High-Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”—HEB. ix. 11, 12.

## MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:

This is the subject of my present letter to you,—*Christ being come.*

We might picture to ourselves various and vast revolutions in things around us, physical, intellectual, and political. The *face of nature* might be changed by some of those great convulsions, like the deluge, which the world has already witnessed. Man's *intellectual* being might be enlightened by advances in science and art, as extensive as those which distinguish civilized Europe from savage barbarism; or *political* revolutions as vast as those which have swept away the ancient dynasties of Asia, and remodelled the constitutions of modern Eu-

rope. But all these together, extended, magnified, and combined to any imaginable degree, would not, and could not have produced a revolution, with reference to the inhabitants of our globe, so vast, so momentous, or so extraordinary, as that which is indicated by these three words—*Christ being come*.

The Gentiles were once sunk in idolatry, ignorance and uncleanness; but now, *Christ being come*, the gospel is preached, and a great multitude, whom no man can number, of every nation and kindred and tongue, are waiting the great day when they shall stand before the throne in white robes, and give glory to the Lamb.

The Jew was once a privileged and isolated being, possessing alone the adoption and the covenant and the giving of the law, and the glory, and the promises; but now, *Christ being come*, that which was glorious has no glory, by reason of the glory which excelleth.

Angels were once sent on missions of mercy, few and far between, to the single family of the seed of Abraham, and employed only with reference to the gentiles in executing judgments, as on Sennacherib and his army; but now,

*Christ being come*, they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister everywhere to them that shall be heirs of salvation.

Yea, God himself was once separated from man, because man was an enemy to him; but now, *Christ being come*, he preaches peace by Jesus Christ; and we pray you in Christ's stead, as though God did beseech you by us, be ye reconciled to God.

Let us then consider further,—

1st. The office which was assumed by our blessed Lord.

“Christ being come an *High-Priest*.” Even when the Lord Jesus came into the world as the babe of Bethlehem, it was that he might be a *high-priest*. Man wants a *high-priest*, because he is blind and ignorant and sinful and sorrowful. Therefore, as the Scripture says,\* he needs one to offer “*gifts*” to that Being to whom he owes every thing; and “*sacrifice for sins*,” to that holy being whom he constantly offends. You see also from the Scriptures, that the high-priest must be such an one as can have “compassion on the ignorant, and on

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\* Heb. v. 1, 2.

them that are out of the way ;” and further, in order that he may be so, he should himself be “ touched with the feeling of man’s infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are.”

Now the Lord Jesus was born, that he might be just such an high-priest.

He was a child, that he might be a compassionate high-priest to you that are children,—able to feel for you, and feel with you, and so able to teach you, and to help you in every thing.

He took upon him the form of a servant, that he might be able to comfort and strengthen the servant in all his toil and labour and weariness and temptation.

He was a master and teacher, in order that he might sympathize with those who rule and teach, in all their disappointments, their trials, their hopes and their fears, and their watchful efforts and sustained exertions for your good.

He was a spiritual Father, an everlasting Father,\* in order to extend his help and grace to all Christian parents to the end of time, in all their anxieties for their children.

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\* Isa. ix.

And to crown all, to assure us of the acceptance of his mediation with God the Father, he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, the Holy One, the well-beloved, in whom the Father is, and ever will be, *well-pleased*. Such is our high-priest.

But again consider—

2d. The things which he came to minister—*“good things to come.”* We have no *good* thing, but through Christ our great High-Priest. It is through him that the ungodly man has his good things. But there are better things than these for all who love Jesus. All his graces are *good things* indeed. Repentance, faith, pardon, justification, peace, sanctification, consolation, his holy precepts, his faithful warnings, his precious promises.—Oh, what good things !

But our High-Priest has still better things than these to minister to us,—there are good things *now*,—and the man of the world has *his* good things now ; but all a believer's *best things* are the *“good things to come.”* Final deliverance from a body of sin and death, an entrance through the gate into the heavenly city, to join the blessed company of angels

and glorified saints, to walk in the streets of gold, to behold the foundations of jasper and of precious stones, to drink of the river of the water of life, to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, and to dwell for ever in the New Jerusalem, where the Lord God and the Lamb shall be the light of it—these are the “good things to come” of which our great High-Priest is the minister.

3d. *The temple in which our great High-Priest came to minister.* He came “by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands,” &c.

The Jewish tabernacle and temple were glorious; the curtains were of blue and purple and gold and fine twined linen; the walls were beautiful with gold and cherubim and palmtrees; and through this, the outer tabernacle, the high-priest passed to enter into the holiest of all.

But the Lord Jesus entered heaven itself through the tabernacle of his own spotless and glorious humanity. There every grace combines to make him beautiful and lovely. “Destroy this temple,” said he, “and in three days I will build it up again!” He spake of the tem-

ple of his body. But not only is his blessed person the tabernacle, but his body, the church, is the temple through which he continually passes to minister on high. For every member of this holy temple he ministers day by day. In this temple he dwells; in every one who is quickened by his Spirit and taught by his grace; in every redeemed and converted sinner, of every clime and age and station and condition and degree. In his poor saints, in his tried and tempted saints, in all who are circumcised with the circumcision “made without hands,” the Lord Jesus, our great High-Priest, recognises the materials of the greater and more perfect tabernacle, beautified with salvation, by which he is passed to the great mercy-seat in heaven.

But again consider—

4th. *The sacrifice which he offers.* “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but *by his own blood* he entered into the holy place.” Oh, the excellency, the power, the dignity of the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ! You are not as the poor *heathen*, approaching a cruel idol, by a cruel sacrifice, which seals

his bondage in soul and body to the service of the idol.

You are not as the poor *Jew*, approaching Jehovah by the blood of bulls and goats, which sanctifieth indeed to the purifying of the flesh from ceremonial defilement, but still left the worshippers in fear and trembling, as pertaining to the conscience. You are not like the poor *papist*, bringing some sacrifice of his own works or sufferings to a fallible priest, to lull his conscience and enable him to sin again, that the next transgression may bring him with another sacrifice, and with troubled conscience, and trembling heart, to regain from the same priest an imaginary security. But you are brought to God the Father, your covenanted God of grace, by the precious blood of our great High-Priest, with “a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and bodies washed with pure water;” for thus saith the Scripture, “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” and “his blood cleanseth from all sin.”

Lastly, consider—

5th. *The redemption which he has obtained.*



“He entered in *once*, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

Redemption from temporal bondage is a great boon. To have a forfeited earthly inheritance redeemed is a great benefit. But the redemption through the blood of our great High-Priest is an unspeakable and inestimable blessing—for it is the forgiveness of sins. When we are redeemed from sin, we are redeemed from the punishment of sin, and from the consequence of sin, from pain and sorrow, from death and the curse; and this redemption is *eternal*.

It is eternal because of the price paid for it—his precious blood. It is eternal because of the eternity of his priesthood and intercession. He entered in “*once*,”—having obtained “eternal redemption” for us.

To crown this blessing, notice that it is not said “to obtain,” but “*having obtained*.” When Jesus entered into the heavens, the redemption *was* obtained for all his people. We have only to receive it, to renounce self, and trust in it, and it is ours. When he bowed his head on Calvary, and said, “IT IS FINISHED!” the work was done; the redemption of man

was accomplished, and salvation obtained for all who believe.

One word to the *unconverted* among your number. My dear young friends, Christ is come! You are sinful, sorrowful, ignorant, and dying. You require a great high-priest—such an one is the Lord Jesus. He is a compassionate high-priest; he can pity you, help you, save you with an everlasting salvation. Oh! come to him.

To those of the class who through grace have come to him let me say: You know that *Christ is come*; his precious blood has spoken *peace* in times past, let it still do so. He is the high-priest of *good things to come*. His blood has a voice for you to God: let it have a voice from God to you. It tells you, Be ye holy, for I am holy. Remember that it can never speak true peace and comfort sensibly to your hearts, unless it speak also of *grace*. This is always the message, *grace* and *peace*.

But remember it has always purchased one thing for you in all your backslidings, temptations, infirmities, in seasons when you can feel no peace—it has still purchased an access for you to a throne of grace. There you may al-

ways go, with every burden of sin and sorrow ; there you may always *obtain mercy* and *find grace* to help in every time of need.

Seek Jesus, and whatever troubles are appointed to you, you will still find that *Christ is come a high-priest of good things to come*, to all his redeemed people.

Now let our cheerful eyes survey  
Our great High-Priest above ;  
And celebrate his constant care,  
And sympathetic love.

Though raised to a superior throne,  
Where angels bow around,  
And high o'er all the shining train,  
With matchless honours crown'd ;

The names of all his saints he bears,  
Deep graven on his heart ;  
Nor shall the meanest Christian say,  
That he hath lost his part.

Those characters shall fair abide,  
Our everlasting trust,  
When gems, and monuments, and crowns,  
Are moulder'd down to dust.

So, gracious Saviour, on my breast  
May thy dear name be worn :  
A sacred ornament and guard,  
To endless ages borne.

Your affectionate Friend.

## LETTER V.

To God the Father's throne  
Perpetual honours raise;  
Glory to God the Son,  
To God the Spirit praise;  
And while our lips their tribute bring,  
Our faith adores the name we sing.

## MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:

The passage on which I am going to write to you is, I presume, very familiar to you. It is, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen."\*

The sun rises daily, and his cheering light comes to us as an expected and unnoticed thing. The earth brings forth her fruits, we feed on them, but our thoughts are occupied with a thousand other subjects of interest, and we forget them. Let the sun be stayed one day in his course, or the earth be stayed one year from yielding her fruit, and the horror of darkness

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\* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

and the gripe of famine would overwhelm us with despair and destruction.

Thus it is with this beautiful passage ; it occurs so frequently in the solemn services of the sanctuary, that the mind often wanders while the well-known accents fall upon the ear. And yet what a rich treasure do they contain ! Repeat them to one awakened to their import, and yet unaccustomed to their sound, with an uncontrolled emotion, he would say, like the Laplander when he first heard of the sufferings of Christ for sinners,—“ Let me hear that again ! —Let me hear that again ! ” Withdraw them from the sphere of the Christian’s inheritance, and what an aching void would be left. May God the Spirit accompany the words while we endeavour to obtain some profitable thoughts concerning them.

The whole subject naturally divides itself into the several offices of the persons of the Godhead, each being set before us as co-operating in the redemption and justification and salvation of sinners, and each contributing those several blessings most congenial to their offices, and most suited to the wants of guilty and sorrowing men.

The subject of my present letter shall be the first division of the blessing—*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Let me ask you to consider it—

1st. *As it is in himself.*

2d. *As it is brought by him to his people.*

1st. Then let us inquire into *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as it is in himself.*

The word grace signifies every thing that can possibly be imagined of beauty and attractiveness. It recommends itself to the mind, to the affections, to the perceptions. It brings before the eye of the understanding images of kindness and dignity and benevolence and loveliness—every word that is gracious, every action that is at once estimable and graceful.

And in whatever light we view our Lord Jesus Christ, he is “full of grace.”

1. His *words* are full of grace. Grace is poured as a rich odour from his lips. The prejudiced and besotted Jewish multitude marvelled at the “gracious words which he spoke.” The emissaries of the persecuting priesthood were constrained to confess, “never man spake like this man.” And, my dear young friends, are not his words still of sovereign power to tell of grace to the child of sorrow? Does he

not still say to the mourner, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Does he not still say to the trembling heart, "It is I, be not afraid?" Does he not still proclaim to the burdened and overborne, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary," &c. Does he not still say to the guilty penitent, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more?" Does he not still assure the believing suppliant, "Go thy way, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace?" Oh yes, *his words* are full of grace; and even when they burn with holy indignation against the proud and haughty Pharisee, they are but faithful warnings, that they may "*be saved*" from the coming wrath.

2. His *actions* were full of grace. Never was there an action, nay, not an attitude of the Lord Jesus, but it was full of grace. As he *said*, he *did*; and this too should be our description. Oh that men would but *consider* the character of the Lord Jesus!

"Sir, we would see Jesus,"\* was indeed a wise purpose of "certain Greeks." Apart from all that was miraculous in him, no human mind could ever have conceived such a character. There is a moral beauty and consistency, a holi-

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\* John xii. 21.

ness and wisdom, a self-denial and purity, a love and ardour, a meekness and majesty, a heroism and endurance, an undaunted courage combined with an exquisite tenderness, which no human intellect could have contrived and brought together in one history. Such an union of loftiness and loveliness could only be found in him who "tellethe the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names, and yet healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

And, my dear young friends, is he not still the same Jesus? Does he not still go about doing good? Wherever the influence of his holy gospel extends, are not men's natures softened and sanctified? Do not benevolence and integrity, sobriety and temperance, brotherly kindness and domestic happiness, intellectual light and rational liberty, follow in his train? Does not the Lord "do good to the soul that seeketh him?"

Does he not still open the blind eyes, heal the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captive, set at liberty the bruised, preach glad tidings to the poor, because he is *full of grace*? Oh! yes; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.



And why were his words and actions thus full of grace?

3. Because *his soul was full of grace*. This was the treasury and store-house of his words and actions. "Ye know," says the apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich." Yes, from all eternity, it was the mind and purpose of the Divine Word to empty himself, to lay aside his glory, to live a life of sorrows, and to die a death of excruciating sufferings, that he might save us from hell, and bring us to the joys of heaven. And it was for this "joy set before him," even the joy of saving sinners from eternal death—of setting the children of the curse among the seraphs in glory, that he "endured the cross, despising the shame."

Thus is he full of grace. How full? Sufficiently to supply the wants of every soul through all eternity.

2d. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as brought to his people*. There is not only grace in our Lord Jesus Christ; but *grace came by Jesus Christ*. And, my dear friends, unless his

grace come *to* you, all the grace that is in him is of no avail. The mint may be full of gold, but what is that to the poor starving child who is trying to beg a piece of bread in the streets? There may be cheerful hearths and happy homes along the shore, but what are they to the sinking mariner who has been shipwrecked on the rocks?

So, my dear friends, it is not in admiring the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but in partaking of it, that there is salvation. It is not a gazing in the ecstatic rapture of superstitious enthusiasm upon the picture of the cross; but a washing of the soul by faith in the precious blood of Jesus. It is not gazing sentimentally upon the water of life, and scrutinizing its clearness; but drinking of its precious streams, which will fill you with the blessings of redemption.

Accordingly, not only does the beloved disciple speak of grace coming by Jesus Christ; but he goes on to speak of it as further actually imparted to those who, through the same grace in him, believe: "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."\* A

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\* John i. 16.

remarkable passage, as testifying to us that he is, indeed, in the language of the poet—

“Our never-failing treasury, fill’d  
With boundless stores of grace.”

And not only so, but that the true Christian draws from this treasury, “grace for grace,” *i. e.* grace *corresponding* to his grace. Not only pardon, peace, joy, consolation, and all those graces which we may *passively* receive; but the more active and strenuous graces of holiness and zeal, benevolence and boldness, love to souls and hatred of sin.

Then, my dear friends, there are two branches of inquiry of the utmost importance opened to you by this subject.

*First*, If the soul of the blessed Saviour be so gracious, his words so gracious, his dealings so gracious, have you received his grace? Has it been brought to you? Are you *passively* the subjects of his grace? Some of your sins you know,—many more are known only to God, who searches the heart. Has the precious blood of Jesus flowed over them all? Have you a scriptural peace? There may be a *deceitful* peace, like the lull before the storm; but the peace which is brought by faith in

his atoning blood, is like the calm when the tempest is past, and the vessel safely at anchor. Remember, too, how exceeding rich and free is this grace, that it is offered to the chief of sinners, to the blasphemer, to the persecutor, to the injurious: "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

*Secondly*, To such of you as have received this grace, does "*grace reign through righteousness?*" Paul, though a persecutor, found grace passively; but how did it operate and act upon him? It was not received in vain; nay, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding *abundant in faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus.*"\* Grace knit his renewed soul in cordial love to the Saviour, and in cordial, enterprising, energetic love to the brethren. "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk in him.*" And "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Your affectionate Friend.

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\* 1 Tim. i. 14.

## LETTER VI.

“The love of God be with you all.”—2 Cor. xiii. 14.

MY DEAR FRIENDS:

In a former letter, when the first clause of this passage occupied our attention, we were led to consider our difficulty in realizing the full depth and importance of the most familiar passages in God's word, just because they come so frequently before us. Hence it is good sometimes to exercise the mind and heart, in exploring the richness and extent of that good land which is so frequently spread before us in the distant landscape; then we may ascertain the beauty of the many flowers which diversify its surface, and still more estimate the untold wealth treasured up for us in the exhaustless mines hidden beneath the soil.

We were led also to consider the whole subject of the verse, as the exhibition of the redeeming love of the adorable Godhead; each person being set before us as co-operating in the justi-

fication, sanctification, and salvation of guilty man, and each person contributing those special benefits most congenial to the offices he has assumed, and most suitable to the special wants of a lost and miserable, yet immortal creature.

We then dwelt more particularly on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our subject now is, therefore, the next clause, "The love of God be with you all," and may the Spirit of grace, and truth, and love be with you while we consider—

1st. The love of God as it is in itself.

And now, though we stand on the shores of an ocean, vast, boundless, fathomless, let us endeavour, by the eye of faith, to gaze a little on its magnificent expanse. The love of God! What is love? What is God?

What is love? *Love*, it has been said, only exists where one being, which might be all in all to itself, chooses not to be so; but comes out of itself to live in and for another. Every other imitation of it is only its far-off shadow, as the twilight gleam indicates the far-off sun; but it would be too much to call it love. Love, then, in its essence and perfection, is the free, unpurchased affection of an independent being

flowing out from its own generous benevolence, without any previous necessity to draw it forth. This is love !

And what is God ? God is a spirit, and God is light,—the Father of spirits, and the Father of lights. Every thing high and noble in angelic existence owes itself to Him. Every thing bright, and beautiful, and good in creation owes itself to Him—and this God is love ! He is the exhaustless source of every thing benevolent and blessed. He comes out of himself to manifest himself for, and throw himself into, every being which partakes of his goodness and his love !

How completely do we find these ideas set forth in the word of truth, “Herein is love, *not* that we loved God, but that *he loved us*, and sent his Son to be a propitiation *for our sins.*” There is nothing in us to draw it forth, but it arises freely from himself, and like the light which streams from the sun of heaven, it pours itself on otherwise dark objects, and bathes them with its brightness, and gilds them with its glory !

Such is the love of God ! And in order that it may be brought home to our very hearts, it

is set before us under the most tender images :  
“As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.” It is love as tender, love as true, love as unrequited (and infinitely more) as that of a parent to a helpless infant, with which God loves his creatures and his children.

Having thus endeavoured to communicate some faint idea of the love of God considered especially in itself, I will now set before you—

2d. The love of God as brought to us through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deep, and vast, and mighty as is the love of God, there is one thing which opposes to it an impassable barrier—and that is SIN. Holy love must hate and punish sin, for sin rebels against love, throws down its altars and desolates its temples. There is a hell, because God is love; there he will shut up wicked spirits, and wicked men, that they may no more defile and corrupt his world. “He will destroy them that destroy the earth.”

But if sin, then, be such a barrier, how can the love of God reach us? For we are born in sin, and children of wrath. We are sur-



rounded by monuments of his love ; the love of God plays around the unconverted man in all directions ; it shines over his head, upholds his steps, prepares his table, makes his bed ; but there is one place which it does not visit—his poor desolate, distracted *heart*. Hence the connection of the motto of the present letter ; it is *first* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *then* the love of God. For though the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ proceeds from the love of God, it is only by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that we can taste the love of God : “No man knoweth the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal him.”

It is this *grace* which removes the barriers of sin. By this grace God can be just, and the justifier of the ungodly. It provides the sacrifice, blots out the transgression, brings and seals the pardon, sanctifies and saves. It comes to the sinner freely, and tells him of a free and full and loving reconciliation. It breaks down the barrier, softens and opens the hard and closed heart, and pours into it the full tide of a Father's love.

Thus is the love of God brought to the soul by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, my dear friends, let me ask you in conclusion, What is this love of God to you? Is it like a sunbeam falling on a gravestone, while there is nothing within but dead men's bones and all uncleanness? or is it like the sunshine on a well-watered garden, causing it to bring forth and bud, and rejoice, and bear fruit abundantly? Be assured, that if your hearts are alive and quick to things below, and this love of God be to you a dreamy mystery or an idle tale, you have as yet no abiding portion in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Seek this grace earnestly; it is your only remedy; and remember, that without it you must be a stranger to the love of God.

And if the Spirit bear witness with your spirit that ye are children of God, if you have sought and found a Saviour's grace, if you are seeking, however feebly and tremblingly, to find that grace and walk in it, then lift up your heads, confirm the feeble knees, strengthen the weak hands, for God is with you of a truth. You can adopt the language of the devout Doddridge and say—

Hail, everlasting Prince of peace!  
Hail, Governor divine!  
How gracious is thy sceptre's sway!  
What gentle laws are thine!

His tender heart with love o'erflow'd,  
Love spoke in every breath;  
Vigorous it reign'd through all his life,  
And triumph'd in his death.

Oh, be the law of love fulfill'd,  
In every act and thought;  
Each angry passion far remov'd,  
Each selfish view forgot.

Be thou, my heart, dilated wide,  
By thy Redeemer's grace:  
And, in one grasp of fervent love,  
All earth and heaven embrace.

In the language of the apostle, "Ye believed, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, *keep yourselves in the love of God*, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

And thus may "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God be with you all."  
Amen.

Your affectionate Friend.

## LETTER VII.

“The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.”  
2 COR. xiii. 14.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:

This closes that remarkable benediction which the whole church of Christ from the beginning has so often dwelt upon with gratitude, and recalled to the memory of the believer for his consolation and edification. It supplies the last office of the adorable Trinity in the personal work of God the Holy Spirit, and adds the keystone to the arch of redeeming love in the temple of our salvation. It affords subject-matter for the deepest humiliation, and a theme for the highest praise; in other words, it attunes the soul of the true believer to that very harmony of lowliness and confidence, of self-distrust and trust in Christ, which it is the great end and object of the gospel to produce.

For does it not afford a subject of deep

humiliation, to reflect that all the rich grace of Christ, and all the abounding love of the Father, are not, in themselves alone, sufficient for the salvation of a soul? The thirsty traveller may stand or recline upon the brink of the well, and its cooling waters may be gushing up below in their abundance, but yet it might be said to the fainting spirit, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep;" whence to thee, then, "this living water?"

And does it not afford the theme of highest praise to be assured that, when the weakness and infirmity, the blindness and ignorance, the sin and corruption of our nature would otherwise incapacitate us from tasting the rich mercies of redeeming love, God the Spirit condescends to undertake for us by teaching us to pray, by helping our infirmities, by enlightening our darkness, and by implanting and nourishing the seeds of holiness in all those who flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel?

Consider then—

1st. THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY GHOST, AS BRINGING US INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

With all the rich grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the tender love of the Father in providing such a Saviour, the natural heart of man is enmity against God, averse from communion with him, and indifferent to all grace and godliness. Talk to the unrenewed man of the love of Christ and of the things which God has prepared for them that love him, and he has no heart for them. Invite him to the marriage supper of the King's Son, and he makes light of it. Ask for the fruits of his Lord's vineyard, and if he do not join with those who "entreat shamefully" his servants, yet he will go to his farm or his merchandise and make excuse. The banquet may be rich, but he has no appetite for it. His Father's house may be filled with all the accommodation which love could devise, but he will betake himself, in preference, to the waste, howling wilderness.

Now it is the work of God the Spirit to subdue this enmity and overcome this aversion; to reveal to the blind eye the loveliness of Christ; to apply to the wandering heart the cords of tenderness, and draw it from its lusts and vanities to its Father and its God. And thus it is

brought into real *fellowship* with God the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Thus the barrier is removed, the estrangement is taken away, the soul of man is again brought into sympathy with God.

But while God the Spirit thus works with the heart of the reconciled man, thus enlightens the understanding, and renews the affection, by bringing the soul into communion with God the Father through God the Son; he has, moreover, a special work of his own, which he undertakes and executes, for all who are thus brought home to God.

Therefore consider—

2d. THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY GHOST, WITH REFERENCE TO HIMSELF.

Not only does he lead the soul in the way which Christ has opened to the Father, thus raising *it* from earth to heaven; but he also takes of the things of Christ in heaven and brings them down continually to the soul on earth, revealing them, unfolding them, and applying them. And this he does by a work of his own, a special work, even by his own personal in-dwelling in the hearts of all who by faith receive the Lord Jesus as their only and complete Saviour.

To this wonderful and blessed truth the departing Saviour testified in his last address to his disciples. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."\*

Here are described the gracious offices of the Spirit in teaching and support and counsel; and these offices are executed in the way of unspeakable *comfort*, for God the Spirit is described as *the Comforter*, as if all true comfort were to be found in him, and no true comfort out of him. And then how remarkable the expression, "another comforter;" implying that he is just such an one as the Lord Jesus himself, as patient, as enduring, as loving, as merciful, as compassionate, as gracious. And all this comfort is said to be ministered by his presence and in-dwelling in the soul; for this is the word of Jesus: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you

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\* John xvi. 13-15.



ANOTHER COMFORTER, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; FOR HE DWELLETH WITH YOU, AND SHALL BE IN YOU.”\*

My dear young friends, Christians lose much for want of a realizing faith in this matter. It is an oft-forgotten, but cardinal truth of Christianity, that it is especially the *dispensation of the Spirit*. He who receives Christ has a covenant title to the in-dwelling. He knows he is Christ's by the spirit: “Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.”† Hence many who are in some measure alive to the great love of God our Father in giving his well-beloved Son for us, to the love of Jesus in living and dying for us, and are even not destitute of many of the graces of the Spirit, are nevertheless downcast and perplexed, unstable and diffident, and walking by a lower standard of faith and comfort than that assigned to them in the gospel; because they want the light and assurance and “strong consolation” afforded by the consciousness of the

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\* John xiv. 16, 17.

† 1 John iii. 24.

in-dwelling of God the Spirit, by covenant-promise, secured to them in Christ.

It still remains to consider—

3d. THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY GHOST, WITH REFERENCE TO OUR BRETHREN IN CHRIST JESUS.

God the Spirit not only leads the soul into the grace of the Son, and the love of the Father, but into “THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.”

There is a brotherhood with all men by our common descent from Adam. There is an outward ecclesiastical brotherhood between those who belong to the same branch of the visible church. Both these may be dissolved. But there is another nearer, closer, indissoluble brotherhood, of a spiritual and heavenly nature, between those who are really united in Christ Jesus.

Of this church and family the apostle speaks.\* “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to

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\* 1 Cor. xii. 12-14.

drink into one spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." And again: "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: wherefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."\*

In the natural body there is one life which animates, and one nervous system which conveys throughout all its parts the most rapid electric sympathy. So is it with the spiritual body of Christ; and there is as great a difference between the members of this mystical body and the nominal Christian, (however plausible his outward profession,) as there is between the living limb of the natural body and the garment, however costly, which is wrapped around it.

Of this communion of the saints, again, the apostle speaks, not as a mere human bond of union and regard arising from party interests, but as a heaven-taught principle triumphing over all party; for he thus writes to the Thessalonians, "But, as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are TAUGHT OF GOD TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER."†

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\* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

† 1 Thess. iv. 9.

Then, let us learn from the whole subject of this letter—

1. The necessity, the absolute necessity of the power and influence of God the Spirit for the quickening and saving of our souls. “If any man,” says the apostle, “have not the spirit of Christ, HE IS NONE OF HIS.” And again, “to be carnally-minded is DEATH, but to be spiritually-minded is LIFE AND PEACE.”\* It is LIFE, for it quickens us from a death in sin; it is PEACE, for it brings us into living fellowship with God the Father, and God the Son—“the very God of peace.”

2. And the great channel for the communication of the Spirit is the word of God, received into the heart by faith in Christ Jesus. “The words that I speak unto you,” saith the Lord Jesus, “they are spirit and they are life.”† “Being born again,” says the apostle Peter, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” “Received ye the spirit,” asks the apostle Paul, “by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?”‡

3. And the great means of cherishing the in-

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\* Rom. viii. 6, 9.

† John vi. 63.

‡ Gal. iii. 2.

fluences of the Spirit is a loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ: "If ye love me, keep my commandments,"\* saith the Saviour, and *then* adds, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.† "The work of righteousness shall be *peace*, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever;"‡ and again, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways,§ and again, it is written, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,"|| "Quench not the Spirit."¶

4. Then if these things be so, my dear young friends, while you dwell upon the love of God the Father in sending the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, while you remember the exceeding "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor," and bled and died for you, oh! forget not the love and grace of God the Spirit, in coming down also from heaven to make his abode with you, to dwell with you in the midst of all your wayward-

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\* John xiv. 15.

† Verse 16.

‡ Isa. xxxii. 17.

§ Isa. lxiv. 5.

|| Eph. iv. 30.

¶ 1 Thess. v. 19.

ness and backslidings and ingratitude, to strive with your deep natural corruption, to stand by you in your temptations, to share in your sorrows, and to make intercession for you in all your distresses, "with groanings which cannot be uttered."

5. Lastly, "Let brotherly love continue,"\* "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."† Every believer in the Lord Jesus, of every nation, of every clime, of every colour, should be dear to your hearts. "Love not in word, neither in tongue, but IN DEED, AND IN TRUTH."‡ "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

Oh that these fruits of the Holy Comforter may be in you and abound! "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

And "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

Your affectionate Friend.

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\* Heb. xiii. 1.

† 1 John iii. 14.

‡ Verse 18.





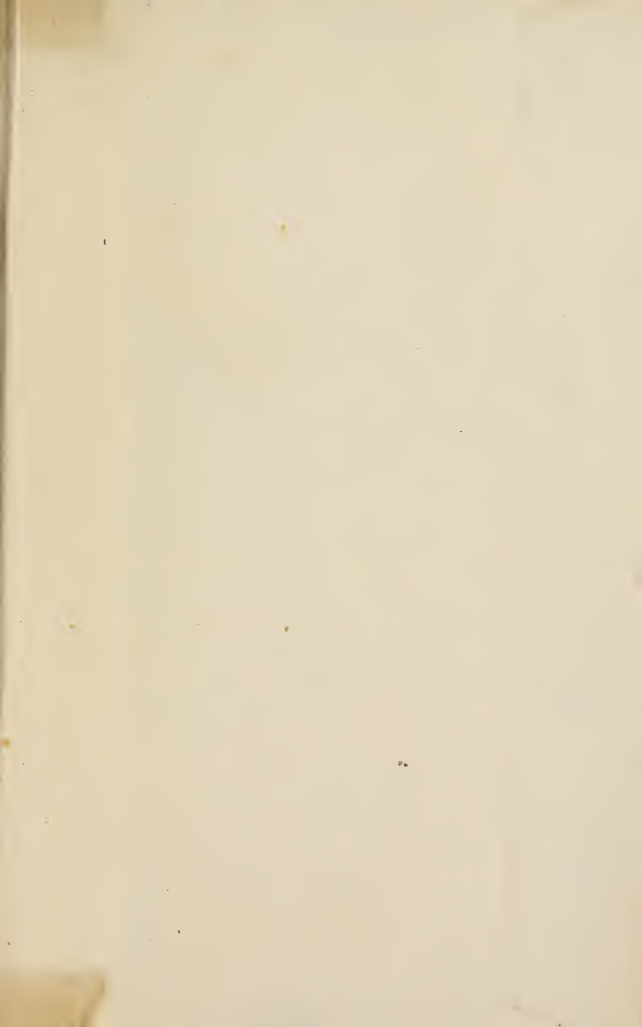




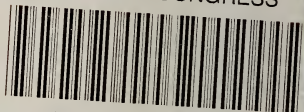
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